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DEBRIS

MADGE MORRIS

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SELECTIONS FROM POEMS

BY

MAIDGE MORRIS.

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To the one who, reading, may fancy—
With a kindly thought for me—
There's a grain of gold in its driftings,
I dedicate this "Debris."

PREFACE.

This waif is born of emergency, and timidly launched on the rough sea of opinion. Critic, touch it gently; it assumes nothing—has nothing to assume; and your scalpel can only pain its

AUTHOR.

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MYSTERY OF CARMEL.

The Mission floor was with weeds o'ergrown,
And crumbling and shaky its walls of stone;
Its roof of tiles, in tiers and tiers,
Had stood the storms of a hundred years.
An olden, weird, medieval style
Clung to the mouldering, gloomy pile,
And the rythmic voice of the breaking waves
Sang a lonesome dirge in its land of graves.
Strangely awed, I felt that day,
As I walked in the Mission old and gray—
The Mission Carmel at Monterey.

An ancient owl went fluttering by,
Scared from his haunt. His mournful cry
Wakened the echoes, till roof and wall
Caught and re-echoed the dismal call
Again and again, till it seemed to me
Some Jesuit soul, in mockery—
Stripped of rosary, gown, and cowl—
Haunted the place, in this dreary owl.
Surely I shivered with fright that day,
Alone in the Mission old and gray—
The Mission Carmel at Monterey.

Near the chapel vault was a dungeon grim,
And they say that many a chanted hymn
Has rung a knell on the moldy air
For luckless errant prisoned there,
As kneeling monk and pious nun
Sang orison at set of sun.
A single window, dark and small,
Showed opening in the heavy wall,
Nor other entrance seemed attained
That erst had human footstep gained.
I paused before the uncanny place
And peered me into its darksome space.
Had it of secret aught to tell,
That locked up darkness kept it well.
I turned, and lo! by my side there stood
A being of strangest naturehood.
Startled, I glanced him o'er and o'er,
Wondering I noted him not before.
His form was stooped with the weight of years,
And on his cheek was a trace of tears;
Over all his face a shade of pain
That deepened and vanished, and came again.
Fixed he his woeful eyes on me—
Through my very soul they seemed to see.
And lightly he laid his hand on mine—
His hand was cold as the vestal shrine.
"'Tis haunted," he said, "haunted, and he
Who dares at night-noon go with me
To this cursed place, by phantoms trod,

Must fear not devil, man, nor God."
"Tell me the story," I cried, "tell me!"
And frightened was I at my bravery.
A curious smile his thin lips curved,
That well had my bravery unnerved.
And this is the story he told that day
To me in the Mission old and gray—
The Mission Carmel at Monterey.

"Each midnight, since have seventy years
Begun their cycle around the spheres,
Two faces have looked from that window there.
One is a woman's, young and fair,
With tender eyes and floating hair.
Love, and regret, and dumb despair,
Are told in each tint of the fair sweet face.
The other is crowned with a courtly grace,
Gazing, with all a lover's pride,
On the beautiful woman by his side.
Anon! a change flits o'er his mien,
And baffled rage in his glance is seen.
Paler they grow as the hours go by,
With the pallor that comes with the summons to die.
Slowly fading, and shrinking away,
Clutched in the grasp of a gaunt decay,
Till the herald of morn on the sky is thrown;
Then a shriek, a curse, and a dying moan,
Comes from that death-black window there.
A mocking laugh rings out on the air,

From that darkful place, in the nascent dawn,
And the faces that looked from the window are gone.
Seventy years, when the Spanish flag
Floated above yon beetling crag,
And this dearthful mission place was rife
With the panoply of busy life;
Hard by, where yon canyon, deep and wide,
Sweeps it adown the mountain side,
A cavalier dwelt with his beautiful bride.
Oft to the priestal shrive went she;
As often, stealthily, followed he.
The padre Sanson absolved and blessed
The penitent, and the sin-distressed,
Nor ever before won devotee
So wondrous a reverence as he.
A-night, when the winds played wild and high,
And the ocean rocked it to the sky,
An earthquake trembled the shore along,
Hushing on lip of praise its song,
And jarred to its center this Mission strong.
When the morning broke with a summer sun,
The earth was at rest, the storm was done.
Still the Mission tower'd in its stately pride;
Still the cottage smiled by the canyon-side;
But never the priest was there to bless,
And the cottage roof was tenantless.
Vainly they sought for the padre, dead,
For the cottage dwellers; amazed, they said
'Twas a miracle; but since that day

There's a ghost in the Mission old and gray—
The Mission Carmel of Monterey.

"A sequel there is to that tale," said he,
"Of the way and the truth I hold the key."
"Show me the way," I cried, "Show me
To the depth of this curious mystery!"
He waved me to follow; my heart stood still
Under the ban of a mightier will
Than mine. A terror of icy chill
O'er-shivered my being from hand to brain,
Freezing the blood in each pulsing vein,
As I followed this most mysterious guide
Through the solid floor at the chancel side,
Into a passage whose stifling breath
Reeked with the pestilence of death.
Down through a subterranean vault,
Over broken steps with never a halt,
Till we stood in the midst of a spacious room,
A charnel-house in its shroud of gloom.
Only a window, narrow and small,
Left in the build of the heavy wall,
Through which the flickering sunbeams died,
Showed passway to the world outside.
Slowly my eyes to the darkness grew,
And I saw in the gloom, or rather knew,
That my feet had touched two skeleton forms,
One closely clasped in the other's arms.
Recoiling, I shuddered and turned my face

From the fleshless mockery of embrace.
Again o'er a heap of rubbish and rust,
I stumbled and caught in the moth and dust
What hardly a sense of my soul believes—
A mold-stained package of parchment leaves!
A hideous bat flapped into my face!
O'ercome with horror, I fled the place,
And stood again with my curious guide
On the solid floor, at the chancel's side.
But, lo! in a moment the age-bowed seer
Was a darkly frowning cavalier,
Gazing no longer in woeful trance,
Vengeance blazed in his every glance.
Then a mocking laugh rang the Mission o'er,
And I stood alone by the chapel door;
And, save for the mold-stained parchment leaves,
I had thought it the vision that night-mare weaves.
Hardly a sense of my soul believes,
Yet I held in my hand the parchment leaves.
Careful I noted them, one by one,
Each was a letter in rhyming run,
Written over and over, in tenderest strain,
By fingers that never will write again.
I strung them together, a tale to tell,
And named it "The Mystery of Carmel."
And these are the letters I found that day,
In the mission ruin, old and gray—
The Mission Carmel of Monterey:

TO THE HOLY FATHER SANSON.

Oh, holy father, list thee to my prayer!
I may not kneel to thee as others kneel,
And tell my heart-aches with the suppliant's air,
But fiercer burns the fire I must conceal.

My soul is groping in the mists of doubt,
The sunlight and the shadows all are gone,
Only a cold, gray cloud my life 's about,
Nor ever vision of a fairer dawn.

A father ne'er my brow in loving smoothed,
Nor taught my baby tongue to lisp his name;
No mother's voice my childish sorrows soothed,
Nor sought my wild, imperious will to tame.

Yet ran my life, like some bright bubbling spring,
Too full of thoughtless happiness to care
If that the future might more gladness bring,
Or might its skies be clouded or be fair.

Afar upon the purple hills of Spain—
Since waned the moons of half a year ago—
I sported, reckless as the laughing main,
Nor dreamed in life a thought of grief to know.

To-day I pine here in a chain whose gall
Is bitterer than drop of wormwood brought
From that salt sea where nothing lives, and all
The recompense my willfulness has brought.

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Oh, holy father, list thee to my prayer!
And though I may not kneel as others kneel,
And tell my heart-aches with a suppliant air,
I crave thy grace a sickened soul to heal.

Here, close beside this sacred font of gold,
My humble prayer, oh, father, I will lay,
With all its weight of misery untold;
And wait impatient that which thou wilt say.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

When to the font, this morn, my lips I pressed,
A fairy's gift my fingers trembled o'er;
A sweeter prayer ne'er smile of angel blessed,
Nor gemmed a tiar that the priesthood wore.

The secret of thy grief I may not know,
Since that thy lips refuse the tale to tell;
Methinks, dear child, it was the sound of woe
That woke an echo in my heart's deep well.

The wail of a spirit that a-yearning gropes
In darkness for the sunlight that is fled;
A broken idol in secret wept, and hopes—
Crushed hopes—that are to thee as are the dead.

A tender memory ling'ring yet of when
Each bounding pulse beat faster with its joy;
A something that allured, and won, and then
With waking fled, and years may not destroy

The impress which it left upon thy brain.
But seek thee, child, grief's ravaging to stay?
Thy tears might fall as falls the show'ring rain,
They could not wash the heart's deep scars away.

Repine thee not; shroud not thy faith in gloom;
Shrink not to meet a disappointment's frown;
Away beyond the narrow bordered tomb,
Who here have borne the cross may wear the crown.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

Whisper to him, fairies, whisper—
Whisper softly in his ear
That some one is waiting, waiting,
Listening his step to hear.

Fairies, if he knew his presence
Would a demon's spell allay,
Would he heed your timid whisperings?
Would he—will he come to-day?

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

Fairies whisper, ever whisper,
In the silence of the night,
And he catches the soft murmurs
Floating in the starry light.

And they tell him; yes, they tell him,
All in accents sweet and clear,
Of the beautiful Hereafter
That is ever drawing near.

There are loved ones waiting, waiting,
For his footfall on the shore;
They will welcome his appearing—
They will greet him o'er and o'er.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

Oh, would the fairies to her whisper
The truths which they to him impart,
Teach her a beautiful hereafter,
A Heaven to bless a tired heart.

Yet thinks she that the dear ones waiting
Would envy not the boon she craves—
To rear fair friendship's sacred altar
Where love and hope sleep in their graves.

She knows not that a loving welcome
Will wait her in a realm of light,
Nought of a future meeting whispers,
No faith illumes her soul's dark night.

But oh! she knows, has by experience,
The saddest of all lessons learned;
Knows that she gathered dead-sea apples,
Which in her hands to ashes turned.

She knows into a trammelled torrent,
Is changed her life's free flowing tide;
Knows that her hand no oar is holding,
With which her drifting bark to guide.

She knows, yes, knows that, like the mirage,
Which for the thirsty traveler gleamed,
The sweet ideal she fondly cherished
Was never there; it only seemed.

If what she knows is to her proven
A false, deluding, fleeting show,
Can she, generous spirit, can she
Trust blindly what she does not know?

But if for this he shuts against her
The heart that's shining in his eyes,
She'll bring the gift that for the Peri
Unbarred the gate of paradise.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

If she'll let him be her teacher
In the mysteries of life,
In the spirit's grand unfoldment
Far beyond this world of strife,

A sacred altar he will build her,
And dedicate to friendship true,
And this shall be their bond of union,
More constant than all others knew.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

Kind teacher, henceforth be it mine
To kneel at friendship's sacred shrine,
And hope's bright budding flowers entwine
Into a garland for thy brow.
And thou shalt wait not for the hours
That gem creation's radiant towers,
To woo thee to elysian bowers,
But wear it now.

Too long a dreamer have I been,
Too long life's dark side only seen;
And if thou canst, while thus I kneel,
The mystery of life reveal,
Then gladly will I learn of thee.
For as on flowers the dewdrops fall,
As sunbeams break the storm-cloud's pall,
As pardon comes to lives which blame
Has crushed beneath its weight, so came
Thy sympathy to me.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

Life is love, and only love,
Love that had its source above.
It wreathes with flowers the chastening rod,
And diamond decks the throne of God.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

If "life is love, and only love,"
  Then never have I lived before;
But for love's sake I'll sit me down
  And careful con the lesson o'er.

I fain would win the shining goal,
  So far away, so seeming fair,
But could not reach its hights alone;
  Then, teacher, take me, take me there.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

Thy teacher, then, will take thee there,
  And ever watch with tender care,
To guard thy way to loftiest aim,
  And his reward thy love shall claim.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

O, inconsistent teacher,
  He'd knowledge give away;
Fill head and heart, from tome of art,
  Then take me for his pay.

He'd kindly lead me to the realm
  Where joyous freedom reigns,
He'd teach my soul love's sweet control,
  Then claim it for his pains.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

Ah! Reyenita, do not charge
To selfishness thy teacher's plea,
He seeks thine every wish to bless,
His deepest fault is loving thee.
"Heaven's kingdom," said the Nazerene,
"Is in the heart;" sweet fairy queen,
Thou rulest alone this realm of mine,
Canst say I have no place in thine?

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

They boast of Ormuz' milk-white pearls,
The ruby's magic art,
And proudly wear the crystal drop
That fires the diamond's heart.

And these may admiration claim,
And countless wealth may sway,
But rarer gem was given to me,
One golden summer day.

Its wondrous tints, a brilliant glow,
Emit in darkest gloom,
A sweeter fragrance 'round it clings,
Than breath of eastern bloom.

Were all earth's costly jewels thrown
In one great glittering heap,
They could not buy for ev'n a day
The gem I'd selfish keep.

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Yet 'twas not won from pearly depths,
Nor gleaned from diamond mine,
Nor all the chemist's subtlety
Its substance could define.

It ne'er was set in band of gold
Some dainty hand to grace,
Ne'er shone in diadem to deck
A brow of kingly race.

For me alone, a wizard spell
Lies prisoned in its beams,
Hours of enchanted ecstacy
And days of Eden dreams.

Wouldst know the precious gift with which
For worlds I would not part?
The priceless jewel is thy love,
Its setting is my heart.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

O, in the hush of midnight's hour,
When darkness sleeps on land and sea,
How oft in dreams, sweet fragile flower,
Thou'st come to bless and comfort me.

O, in the hush of midnight's hour,
How oft from taunting dreams I start,
To find thee but a fancy flower—
Thou cherished idol of my heart.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

I've a beautiful home, where I live in my dreams,
So joyous and happy—an Eden it seems ;
All beautiful things in nature and art
Are blending to rapture the mind and the heart ;
No discords to jar, no dissensions arise,
'Tis calm as Italia's ever blue skies,
When kissed by the bright rosy blush of the morn ;
And a voice of the spheres on the breezes is borne,
Soft as the murmur of sea-tinted shells,
Sweet as the chiming of far away bells ;
And grief cannot enter, nor trouble nor care,
And the proud peerless prince of my soul, he is there.

In my beautiful home from the cold world apart,
He holds me so close to his fast beating heart ;
More enchanting his voice than the syren-wrapt song,
O'er the wind-dimpled ocean soft floating along,
As he whispers his love in love's low passioned tone,
Such home, and such lover, no other has known.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

O, let us leave this world behind—
Its gains, its loss, its praise, its blame—
Not seeking fame, nor fearing shame,
Some far secluded land we'll find,
And build thy dream-home, you and I,
And let this foolish world go by.

A paradise of love and bliss!
Delicious draughts in Eden bowers,
Of peace, and rest, and quiet hours,
We'll drink, for what we've missed in this.
The shafts of malice we'll defy,
And let this foolish world go by.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

Life of my life, my soul's best part,
I could not live without thee now;
And yet, this love must break my heart,
Or break a sacred vow.

Which shall it be? an answer oft
From puzzling doubts I've sought to wake;
Must joy, or misery, hence be mine,
Must heart or promise break?

Alone, Heaven's highest court would prove
A desolated land to me;
Earth's barest, barren desert wild,
A paradise with thee.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

Thou hast beamed on my pathway, a vision of light,
To guide and to bless from afar;
To illume with thy smile the dead chill of the night,
My star, my bright, beautiful star.

The sun pales before thee, the moon is a blot
On the sky where thine own splendors are;
And dark is the day where thy presence is not,
My star, my bright, beautiful star.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

O love, do not call me a star!
'Tis too cold and bright, and too far
Away from your arms; I would be,
The life drops that flow in your veins,
The pulses that throb in your heart.
My bosom should be the warm sea
Of forgetfulness, tinged with the stains
Of the sunset, when day-dreams depart;
You should drink at its fountain of kisses,
Drink mad of its fathomless deep;

Submerged in an ocean of blisses,
I'd be something to kiss and to keep.
Loving, and tender, and true,
I'd be nearer, oh! nearer to you
Than the glittering meteors are;
Then, love, do not call me a star.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

Thou 'st made for me an atmosphere of life;
The very air is brighter from thine eyes,

They are so soft and beautiful, and rife
With all we can imagine of the skies.

O woman, where is thy resistless power;
I swore the livery of Heaven to grace,
Yet stand, to-day, a sacrilegious tower,
Perjured by the witchery of thy face.

SANSON.

TO SANSON.

Then, love, I'll give thee back thy perjured vow;
I would not hold thee with one pleading breath;
It may be best to leave the pathway now,
That can but lead to death.
I'll crush the agonies that burning swell,
And say farewell.

REYENITA.

TO REYENITA.

"Farewell?" No, not farewell, I'll worship ever
Thy form divine.
No death's despair, no voice of doom shall sever
My heart from thine.

Thou 'st crowned me with thy love and bade me wear it,
I kiss the shrine.
I will not give thee up, nay, here I swear it,
That thou art mine.

* * * * * * * * * *

A desecrated holiness is o'er me,
I've held the Thyrsus cup;
I've dared the thunderbolts of Heaven for thee,
I will not give thee up.

SANSON.

World, farewell!

And thou pale taper light, by whose fast-dying flame I write these words—the last my hand shall pen—farewell! What is 't to die? To be shut in a dungeon's walls and starved to death? She knows, and soon will I. She sought to learn of me, and I to teach to her, the mystery of life. Ha, ha! Who claimed her by the church's law has given us both to learn the mystery of death. What was 't I loved? The eyes that thrilled me through and through with their magnetic subtlety? They 're there, set on my face; but where 's their lifened light? What was 't I loved? The mouth whose coral redness I have buried in my own? 'Tis there, shrunk 'gainst two rows of dead pale pearls, and cold and colorless as lip of statue carved in marble. Was it the form whose perfect outline stamped it with divinity? It 's there, but 'reft of all its winsome roundness, and stiffening in the chill of death. It makes me cold to look upon its rigidness. But just this hour the breath went out; was 't that I loved? 'Twas this I clasped and kissed. What is it that we 've christened love, that glamours men to madness, and stains with falsehood virgin purity? It made this grewsome charnel vault a part of Heaven—

the graves there of those murdered knaves made rests of roses for our heads; it made him spring the bolt and lock us in. Where is the creed's foundation? I've shrived a thousand souls—I cannot now absolve my own. To quench this awful thirst, I cut an artery in my arm and sucked its blood. The thirstness did not cease. They lied. 'Twas not the vultures at Prometheus' heart, 'twas hunger at his vitals gnawed. The salt drops that I swallowed from that vein have set my brain on fire. What 's that? The ground 's a-tremble 'neath my feet as touched with life. Earth, rend your breast and let me in! For anything but this dire darkness, made alive with vengeful eye-balls—his eyes! They glare with hate at me. I heard him laugh but now. For anything but this most loving corpse whose head caressing rests it on my feet. Ah, no, I did not mean it thus; I would not get away alone. I loved that corpse. It was the sweetest bit of human frailty that to man e'er brought a blessing or a curse. I turned from Dias' holy grail to taste its nectar. Hell, throw a-wide your sulphur-blazoned gates, I 'll grasp it in my arms and make the plunge! Hist! what was that? I heard him laugh again. Laugh, fiend, you cannot hurt me more. Ah! Reyenita, mine in life you were, in death you shall be mine. When this clogged blood has stopped the wheels of life, I'll put my arms around your neck, I'll lay my face against your frozen one, and thus I'll die. When this foul place has crumbled to the sunlight, some relic-hunting lunatic will stumble o'er our bones, and pitiless

will weave a tale for eyes more pitiless to read. Back, Stygian ghoul! Death 's on me now. I feel his rattle in my throat! My limbs are blocks of ice! My heart has tuned it with the muffled dead-march drum! A jar of crashing worlds is in my ears! A drowsy faintness creeps upon——

The seal is broken, the mystery fell;
You have read the letters, what do they tell?
Do they tell you the story they told that day
To me, in the Mission old and gray—
The Mission Carmel at Monterey?

WASTED HOURS.

If that thy hand with heart-will sought,
To work with Christ-love underlying,
But ere thou hadst accomplished aught
Time passed thee by while vainly trying,
The wasted hour, the vain endeavor,
Will wait thee in the far forever.

If thou hast toiled from dawn till eve,
But felt no thrill of joy in giving,
No heart made glad, no want relieved,
Lived but for selfish love of living,
Though idle hours went by thee never,
The hours are lost to thee forever.

ROCKING THE BABY.

I hear her rocking the baby—
Her room is just next to mine—
And I fancy I feel the dimpled arms
That round her neck entwine,
As she rocks, and rocks the baby,
In the room just next to mine.

I hear her rocking the baby
  Each day when the twilight comes,
And I know there's a world of blessing and love
  In the "baby bye" she hums.
I can see the restless fingers
  Playing with "mamma's rings,"
And the sweet little smiling, pouting mouth,
  That to hers in kissing clings,
As she rocks and sings to the baby,
  And dreams as she rocks and sings.

I hear her rocking the baby,
  Slower and slower now,
And I know she is leaving her good-night kiss
  On its eyes, and cheek, and brow.
From her rocking, rocking, rocking,
  I wonder would she start,
Could she know, through the wall between us,
  She is rocking on a heart.
While my empty arms are aching
  For a form they may not press,
And my emptier heart is breaking
  In its desolate loneliness,
I list to the rocking, rocking,
  In the room just next to mine,
And breathe a prayer in silence,
  At a mother's broken shrine,
For the woman who rocks the baby
  In the room just next to mine.

"I DON'T CARE."

"I don't care," we hear it oft
And oft, the words are seeming fair;
But many a heartache lies beneath
A careless "I don't care!"

In every age, from every tongue,
The vain assertions fell;
But oh, trust not the cheating words,
For never the truth they tell!
Hearts may grow sick with hope deferred,
Be crushed with black despair,
But lips, too proud to own defeat,
Will whisper, "I don't care!"

A thoughtless friend flings out in jest—
As jesters always do—
A deadly shaft you wince beneath,
You know the story's true;
But while the dart has pierced your heart,
And poisoned, rankles there,
You look amused, and answer with
A smiling, "I don't care!"

When Fortune's favors are withdrawn,
And friends like shadows fled,
When all your fondest dreams are gone,

Your dearest hopes are dead,
You curse the fickle goddess, then,
Who wrought you such despair,
Yet hide chagrin beneath a frown,
And mutter, "I don't care!"

The veteran, battle-scarred, who fills
A nation's honored place,
Feels keener than his saber's point,
Unmerited disgrace.
With indignation all aflame
He meets some rival's stare;
But for all answer gives the world
A freezing "I don't care!"

A woman's heart is trifled with,
Her hopes are ground to dust,
Her proud soul humbled with neglect,
Betrayed her sacred trust,
Yet, while to desperation stung,
With death and ruin there,
She'll crush the tears and cheat you with
A laughing "I don't care?"

"I don't care!" 'tis but a breath,
The words are seeming fair,
But many a heartache lies beneath
A careless "I don't care!"

A STAINED LILY.

Some lillies grew by a brook-side,
Tall and white, and cold,
And lifted up to the sunshine
Their great red hearts of gold.

And near to their bed grew mosses,
Rank vines, and flowers small,
And loathsome weeds, and thistles,
And the sunlight warmed them all.

Anon, the proud white lillies
Were gathered one by one,
Each to crown a festal
Rarest under the sun.

One lily stooped to the brooklet,
Her face she knew was fair,
And the face of the flowing water
Mirrored her image there.

A hand upraised in envy,
Or carelessness, or jest,
Flung from the turbid water,
Mud, on the lily's breast.

And all the proud, white lillies
  Turned their faces away,
And nobody plucked that lily,
  And day, and night, and day

She wept for her ruined beauty:
  And the dew-drops, and the rain,
Touched with her tears, in pity
  Fell on the muddy stain.

Still stood she in her grieving
  Day, and night, and day;
Nor tears, nor dew, nor rain-drops,
  Could fade the stain away.

Pining in desolation,
  Shunned by each of her kind,
Sought she a bitter solace
  In creatures of coarser mind.

But the breath of the nettle stung her,
  And the thistle's rude embrace
Burned her sensitive nature,
  And scarred the fair, stained face.

Lower drooped the lily,
  And died at the feet of the weeds;
And only the tender mosses
  Ministered to her needs.

And still the tall white lillies
Stand as cold, and proud,
And still the weeds and thistles
Against the lillies crowd.

Alike the same warm sunbeams,
On weed and flower fall,
Alike by the same soil nourished,
And the great God made them all.

A VALENTINE.

I love thee for the soul that shines
Within thine eyes' soft beaming,
From out whose depths the prisoned fires
Of intellect are gleaming.

I love thee for the mind that soars
Beyond earth's narrow keeping,
That measures suns, and stars, and worlds,
Through boundless limits sweeping.

I love thee for the voice whose power
Can in my heart awaken
To passioned life each slumbering chord
The ruder tones have shaken.

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Thou ne'er, perchance, mayst feel the chain
With which this love has bound thee,
Nor dream thee of the hand that flung
Its glittering links around thee.

And vainly mayst thou deem the task
Thy captive bonds to sever—
Who madly dares to love thee now
Will love thee on forever.

WHICH ONE.

Each was as fair as the other,
And both as my life were dear;
And the voices that lisped me mother,
Heaven's music in my ear.

One faded from life—and mother,
And died in the summer dawn;
And I turned away from the other
And wept for the child that was gone.

Then I lay in a weird sleep-vision,
Before me an earth dark scene,
And the land of the sweet Elysian,
And only a grave between.

One child soft called me mother
Out from the shining door,
And smiled and beckoned; the other
Unconsciously played on the floor.

One's path, to my inward seeing,
Was light with a wondrous day,
And led to the hights of being,
And an angel showed the way.

The other lay where Marah's
Hot sands with snares are strewn—
Through many a darksome forest,
And the way was roughly hewn.

A faith to my soul was given—
The weird sleep-vision o'er—
And I turned from the child in heaven
To the child that played on the floor.

LIFE'S WAY.

Good-bye, sweetheart, he said, and clasped her hand,
And rained his kisses on her tear-wet face;
Then broke away, and in a foreign land.
For her dear sake, sought gold, that he might place

Love's jewelled crown upon his queen's fair brow,
And pour his hard-won treasures at her feet;
And swore, than Heaven, than life itself, his vow
To her he held more sacred and more sweet.

She waited as the woman only may
Whose eyes are blinded oft with unshed tears;
Lines on her forehead grew, and threads of gray;
The weary days crept into weary years.

"Oh stars, go down! Oh sun, be shrouded now!
My love comes not; he does not live," she said;
And brushed the curls he 'd kissed back from her brow,
And put on mourning for her dead.

And still as oft the day came round that he
Had left his warm good-bye upon her lips,
As oft she sought the head-land by the sea,
And longing watched the far-off white-sailed ships.

To-day, the low sand-beach was over-strewn;
Torn sail, and broken spar and human form,
'Gulfed by the waves, and crushed, and then out-thrown—
A ship went down in yester-night's wild storm.

She walked among the debris, and the dead,
As some sweet mercy-sister on her round,
Scanning each up-turned face with nameless dread,
For aught of life; her tireless searching found

A babe—a waif with tawny tangled locks,
And great blue eyes with wonder brimming o'er;
Of all the human freight wrecked on the rocks,
The only living thing that washed ashore.

A pearl-gemmed golden case upon its breast
She oped, then stared, her eyes a-sudden wild,
A name, a pictured face told all the rest;
His name—his face—his child!

"UNCLE SAM'S" SOLILOQUY.

I'm a century old and more to-day,—
A ripe old age for a modern man,—
Yet they who rocked my cradle, they say,
Predicted a thousand years my span;
They christened me at the fount of prayer,
And gave me a star-gemmed robe to wear.

My first free breath was the battle-smoke,
And prayerful nurses did not abhor
The sounds that first my ear awoke—
The clash and din and shout of war.
They pressed in my hand a crown of might
And pointed my way to the eagle's flight.

Cannon and sword were my playthings to bless,
(Dangerous toys for a babe to try,)
The stirring reveille my morn caress,
The wild tattoo was my lullaby;
And well, methinks, as the years have run,
Have I wrought the work my sires begun.

An infant prodigy I, and ere
Expired a tenth of my granted day,
I wrested from lion-grasp the spear—
A nation's power I held in sway;
I broke the gyves from freedom's graves,
And steam and lightning I bound my slaves.

I flung my starred robe on the breeze,
From burning tropic to arctic cold.
On distant isles, in distant seas,
A foot-hold gained with sword and gold.
Atlantic's slope and Pacific's strand
I bound together with iron band.

But of late I've premature grown old;
There's something wrong with the clothes I wear;
There is something wrong with the helm I hold,
Else I hold it wrong,—there's wrong somewhere.
Disease too has thrown me his poisoned dart;
His workman are "striking" right at my heart.

My head is so strangely vision thrilled
With plans to evade the demon's stay,

But all the plots that my brain have filled
Only have served to augment his sway,
And on my feet, at the sunset's door,
Is spreading a troublesome grievous sore.

I'm growing ill I can plainly see,
And many prescribe my pain to ease,
But somehow each medicine proves to be
"A remedy worse than the disease."
Though strong as ever, should once my strength
Give way, I must fall a fearful length.

My doctors say they know the cause,
And they've gone to work with eager zest,
Probed and expounded with weighty straws,
And leeches applied to my troubled breast;
I fee them well, as attests my purse,
But day after day I'm growing worse.

Though they have not yet touched the cause they knew,
And are wrangling over its direful flood,
They promise to build me better than new,
And stop the drain on my famished blood;
But lest they're careful while building the dam
They'll scoop out a grave for "Uncle Sam."

NAY, DO NOT ASK.

Nay, do not ask me, Sweet, if I have loved before,
Or if, mayhap, in other years to be,
A younger, fairer face than thine I know,
I'll love her more than thee.

What should it matter if I've loved before,
So that I love thee now, and love thee best?
What matters it that I should love again
If, first, the daisy-buds blow o'er thy breast?

Love has the waywardness of strange caprice,
One can not chain it to a recreant heart,
Nor, when around the soul its tendrils twine,
Can will the clinging, silken bonds to part.

It is enough, I hold thee prisoned in my arms,
And drink the dewy fragrance of thy breath;
And earth, and heaven, and hades, are forgot,
And love holds carnival, and laughs at death.

Then do not ask me, Sweet, if I have loved before,
Or if some day my heart might turn from thee;
In this brief hour, thou hast my soul of love,
And thou art *Is*, and *Was*, and *May be*—all to me.

A PICTURE.

A little maid, with sweet brown eyes,
Upraised to mine in sad surprise;
I held two tiny hands in mine,
  I kissed the little maid farewell.
Her cheeks to deeper crimson flushed,
  The sweet, shy glances downward fell;
From rosy lips came—ah! so low—
    "I love you, do not go!"

I see it through the lapse of years—
This picture, ofttimes blurred with tears.
No tiny hands in mine are held,
  No sweet brown eyes my pulses wake—
Only in memory a voice
  E'er bids me stay for love's sweet sake.

HANG UP YOUR STOCKING.

Laugh, little bright-eyes, hang up your stocking;
    Don't count the days any more;
Old Santa Claus will soon be knocking,
        Knocking,
    Knocking at the door.

Through the key-hole slyly peeping,
Down the chimney careful creeping,
When the little folks are sleeping,
Comes he with his pack of presents.
Such a grin ! but then so pleasant
You would never think to fear him ;
And you can not, *must* not hear him.
He's so particular, you know,
He'd just pick up his traps and go
If but one little eye should peep
That he thought was fast asleep.
Searching broomstick, nails, and shelf,
Till he finds the little stocking—
Softly lest you hear his knocking—
Smiling, chuckling to himself,
He fills it from his Christmas store,
And out he slips to hunt for more.

Then laugh, little bright-eyes, and hang up your stocking;
Don't count the days any more;
Old Santa Claus will soon be knocking,
Knocking,
Knocking at the door.

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OPENING THE GATE FOR PAPA.

Hurrying out to the gateway
Go two little pattering feet;
Eagerly out through the palings
Peer two little eyes, bright and sweet.

A footstep as eager is answering
The sweet eyes that paitently wait,
And papa is kissing, and blessing
The baby that opens the gate.

And every day all the long Summer,
At noontime and evening late,
The little one's watching for papa—
Waiting to open the gate.

And now the bright Summer is ended,
And Autumn's gay mantle unrolled;
The maple leaves wooing the breezes
Are gorgeous in crimson and gold.

At noonday the face at the gateway
Is flushed with a feverish glow,
At night the bright head on the pillow
Is tossing in pain to and fro.

The father kneels down in his anguish,
And stifles the sobs with a groan ;
He knows that his idol is going—
Going out in the midnight, alone.

He buries his face in the pillow,
Close, close to the fast failing breath ;
A little arm clasps his neck closely,
A voice growing husky in death

Says pleadingly, half in a whisper :
" Please, darling papa, don't cry ;
I know Birdie 's going to Heaven—
I heard doctor say he will die ;

" But I'll ask God for one of the windows
The pretty star-eyes look out through,
And when you come up with the angels
I'll sure be the first to see you.

" And maybe I'll find my dear mamma ;
And you 'll come up, too, by-and-by,
And Birdie will watch for you, papa,
And open the gate of the sky."

The little hand falls from his shoulder
All nerveless, the blue eyes dilate,
A shuddering sigh, then the baby
Is waiting to open the gate.

WHITE HONEYSUCKLE.

White honeysuckle, "bond of love,"
  Emblem born in Orient bowers,
Whence mythic Deities have wooed,
  And told the soul's desire in flowers.
As sweet thy breath as Eden's balm,
  As sweet and pure. Methinks that erst
Thy flower was of our earth a part,
  Some angel hand the seed immersed
In fragrance of the lotus' heart,
  And dropped it from the realm of calm.
And life of earth, and life above,
  Thou bindest with thy "bond of love."

ESTRANGEMENT.

Only a "something light as air,"
  Which never words could tell,
Yet feel you that between your lives
  A cloud has strangely fell;
Though never a change in look or tone,
  A change your heart is grieving;
You sentient feel the friend you love
  Has deemed you are deceiving.

A promise rashly given has bound
Your lips the truth to screen,
The nameless something gathers fast
As mist the hills between;
You wrap you in your cloak of pride,
The words are never spoken
That might have thrown the portal wide,
And friendship's tie is broken.

BRING FLOWERS.

Bring flowers, bring flowers, thou Queen of the Spring,
Sweet flowers to garland the earth,
Exotics to bloom in the mansions of wealth,
Wild flowers for the lowly hearth.
Bring flowers for the brave and strong-hearted,
Bring flowers for the merry and glad,
Bring flowers for the weak and despairing,
Bring flowers for the weary and sad.

Bring flowers, bring flowers, thou Queen of the Spring,
Sweet flowers, the dark hours to cheer.
Bring flowers for the little ones, flowers for the aged,
Bring flowers for the bridal and bier.
In this beautiful, sun-lighted Springtime,
Bring flowers their fragrance to shed,
To brighten the homes of the living,
To garnish the graves of the dead.

GOOD-BYE.

Good-bye! Good-bye!
Once pledged we fondly o'er and o'er
That nought should cloud our love's bright sky;
Once thought we that we could not stay
Apart and live. But oh! for us
Fate willed it not to linger thus.
To-day earth's wintry poles apart
Are further not than we in heart,
Nor colder than our sunless way.
Passion and pride can do no more,
And you and I can only say
Good-bye! Good-bye!

Good-bye! Good-bye!
So sad it seems the sound of tears,
So sad it seems life's parting sigh,
And yet, alas! it can but be.
Deserted, ghostly wrecks of dreams
Once freighted with Hope's golden gleams,
Wrecks drifting on a sullen sea,
To mock the memory-haunted years,
Are all now left to you and me.
Good-bye! Good-bye!

IN THE TWILIGHT.

In the twilight gray and shadowy,
  Deepening o'er the sunset's glow,
Softly through the mystic dimness
  Flitting shadows come and go.

As my thoughts in listless wandering
  With these phantom shadows fly,
Meseems they wear the forms of faces,
  Faces loved in days gone by.

One by one I recognize them
  As they silent gather near;
Some are loving, childish faces,
  Knowing naught of grief or care.

Some are blooming, youthful faces,
  Victory confident to win,
Some are from the contest shrinking,
  Wearied with the strife and din.

Some are aged, wrinkled faces,
  Time life's sands has nearly run;
Not a leaflet spared of Springtime,
  Not a furrow left undone.

Other faces, sweet, sad faces,
Wafted o'er the Lethean sea,
Radiant smile in twilight shadows,
But they came not back to me.

In the twilight, dreamy twilight,
When the sultry day is gone,
Quietly o'er vale and hillside,
Tenderly as blush of dawn,

Come the timid evening breezes,
Sighing through the Summer leaves,
Transient as thought's pencil-paintings,
Sweet as weft that fancy weaves.

And as shadows in the twilight
Shapeful forms of faces wear,
So these dainty, light-winged zephyrs,
To my hearing, voices are.

Voices whose sad intonations
Seemingly, as flit they past,
Bring to memory hopes long shattered,
Blissful dreams too bright to last.

Voices, merry laughing voices,
Fondly loved in other years,
Mournfully are whispering to me
That their mirth was drowned in tears.

Telling of a fairer fortune
Far away 'neath tropic skies,
Telling of a broken circle,
Scattered friends and severed ties.

Other kindly, loving voices,
Winning in the long ago,
Tell me now, as then they told me,
"Thou canst live for weal or woe."

Are these weird and mystic voices
But creations of the brain?
Only in illusive fancy
Must I hear their tones again?

Would some magic power lend me
Aid to stay the witching tone,
Art to paint the beauteous picture
Ere its impress swift has flown.

* * * * * *

While I dreamed the day has faded,
Stars are shining overhead,
Evening winds have ceased to whisper,
Twilight's shadows all have fled.

Thus, too oft, our life-work seemeth,
And we, when disowned its sway,
Find we are pursuing phantoms,
Shadows in the twilight gray.

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HOME.

"How many times and oft" has the sweet, sweet word been sung in song and told in story. And he sang sweetest of home, who had never a home on earth. If one to whom home was only a poet's dream, could portray its charms by only imagination, until a million hearts thrilled with responsive echo, how deeper, how more intense must be his longings and recollections who treasures, deep down in his heart the sweet delights and pure associations that he has known, but never may know again. We do not appreciate our blessings until they have passed. We do not try to gather the sunbeams until the clouds have obscured them.

How many and many a youth, brave-hearted and true, answers with eager haste the war call of his native land all heedless of the home he is leaving, and the loving arms that sheltered him there. But when his soldier's blood is crimsoning the sands beneath a foreign sky, the thoughts that go with his ebbing life are of home—all of home.

Who rushes from his home out into the world, blind devotee of fortune's phantom goddess, to realize a phantom indeed, sits down in his despondency and his despair, to dream of "dear old home."

Yes, too, and the wretch—so seemingly depraved that nothing beautiful or pure of soul is left—who flings from him his life in mad suicide, goes out into that trackless eternity with home upon the lips of death. Then if the patter of baby's feet, the glad ring of children's voices echo within the walls of your home, if father and mother, and brothers and sisters brighten it with the sunshine of love, enjoy it while you may, make it your heaven, and be not in over-haste to break the ties that bind you there.

You may never weep, perchance, over a home made desolate by death; and yet, time—so surely as time is—will make it but only a memory. And all too late each heart will learn that it did not prize enough the blessedness of home.

WHY?

Why is it we grasp at the shadow
That flits from us swift as thought,
While the real that maketh the shadow
Stands in our way unsought?
And why do we wonder, and wonder,
What's beyond the hill-tops of thought?

Why is it the things that we sigh for
Are the things that we never can reach?
Why, only the sternest experience
A lession of patience can teach?
And why hold we so careless and lightly
The treasures that are in our reach?

Why is it we wait for the future,
Or dwell on the scenes of the past,
Rather than *live* in the present
Hastening from us so fast?
Why is it the prizes we toil for,
So tempting in fancy's mould cast,
Prove, when to our lips we have pressed them,
Only dead-sea apples at last?
And why are the crowns, and the crosses,
So wondrous inequally classed?

Ask it, ye, over and over,
  Let the winds waft your question on high,
Till memory wanes with the ages,
  Till the stars in eternity die.
And out from the bloom and the sunshine,
  From the rainbow o'erarching the sky,
From the night and the gloom and the tempest,
  Echo will answer you, "Why?"

Suggested by reading, "Lights and Shades" in San Francisco.

OUT IN THE COLD.

Out from a narrow, crowded street,
Sick'ning resort of shame and crime,
  Wearing upon her brow a curse,
Out in the darkness, lost to sight,
Out in the dreary Winter night,
  Fleeing a fate than Nessus worse.
On through the gathering mist and dew
'Till the fog-wrapped city is hid from view;
  'Till the rugged cliffs with the waters meet,
And the mingled voices from every clime
  And the hurrying tramp of reckless feet
Are drowned in the breakers' sobbing rhyme.
But farther out than this ocean beach,

Farther than Charity's hands will reach,
Farther than Pity *dares* to come,
Is she who rushes, with white lips dumb,
To repeat the tale that too oft is told—
Out in the cold.

From the loathesome dens whose scenes appal,
Whose tainted breath 's the Simoom's blast;
Away on the dizzying, surf-washed rock,
Pausing a moment upon the brink—
Pausing a moment perchance to think;
Sliding the bolt in Memory's lock,
And back in its dusty, haunted hall,
Living again the vanished past—
Living her happy childhood o'er;
Chasing the butterflies over the flowers,
Petted and loved, a girl again,
Dreaming away the golden hours;
Living again another scene,
Flattered and toasted "beauty's queen;"
Taking again, with a merry laugh,
From gallant hands a sparkling draught.
O, angels, tell her 'tis a draught of woe!
That *ruin* lies in its amber glow.
Over the rest let oblivion fall,
Cover it up with a funeral pall;
Turn away with a shudder and groan,
Let her live it over alone.
Few are the months, as they count, since then;

Short and joyous they else had been
That to anguished heart and maddened brain
Are long decades of woe and pain.
Over, again, on the wings of thought,
Treading the path which her ruin wrought;
Over again each step she went,
From the sunny home to the swift descent,
Where sin lies hid 'neath a gilded pile,
Down to the haunts of the low and vile.
One more step and it all is done.
  Only a shriek the midnight breaks—
Only a splash in the waves below.
  A wider ripple the water makes.
The rock is bare by the ocean side—
A death-white face with the ebbing tide
Is floating away from the headland bold—
    Out in the cold.

A lifeless form, in the wintry dawn,
  Left on the sand by a rising swell;
A story of weakness, shame, and wrong
  Mutely the frozen features tell.
Noiseless fall on it, tears of dew,
  Over it softly the breezes blow;
Wavelets, kissing the tangled hair,
  Murmur a requiem sad and low.
Out to the barren, bleak hillside
  Rough hands bear it with scorn and jest.
Cradled once in a mother's arms—.

Once by a mother's fond lips pressed—
Under the clods of a new-made grave;
A rough-hewn board at the foot and head,
Where never a flower of love shall wave;
Left with the city's nameless dead—
Left with her fate unwept, untold—
Out in the cold.

TO JENNIE.

Farewell my darling, fare thee well,
Life hence has only dearth;
With thee it were too sweet a dream—
Too much Heaven, for earth.
Thou dost not know the depth of pain
This parting gives to me,
Nor how, as time drags weary on,
My soul will sigh for thee.

Each loved one that thou leavest here,
Some other love may wear,
Each heart will have some other heart
Its loneliness to share.
But I have nothing, darling, left—
You're all the world to me—
And only God and Heaven can know
The love I give to thee.

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WATCHING THE SHADOWS.

Watching the shadows, the fire-light shadows,
That gather and play on the wall;
Dark, flitting shadows, fanciful shadows,
That gather and rise and fall.
Reading the fire shadows' language of shadows,
Pages of darkness and light—
Watching, watching,
Watching the shadows to-night.

Watching the shadows, the fire-light shadows,
That over the wall fitful play;
Dreaming of shadows, dreaming of shadows,
Deep, darker shadows than they.
Heart-shading shadows, soul-darkening shadows,
Flitting in memory's light—
Dreaming, dreaming,
Watching the shadows to-night.

Watching the shadows, the fire-light shadows,
Merrily dancing about,
Wondering if heart-shadows vanish like shadows,
When life's fitful flame has gone out;
Wondering if shadows are deep, darker shadows,
Æons of ages of blight;
Wondering, wondering,
Watching the shadows to-night.

I GIVE THEE BACK THY HEART.

I give thee back thy fickle heart,
Thy faithless vows I've spurned,
I bury deep the blighted hopes
That in my bosom burned.

Yet who had thought a brow so fair,
From guile so seeming free,
A voice so sweet, so winning rare,
So treacherous could be?

Who would have dreamed a form that seemed
Proud Honor's templed shrine,
Could hold within an urn of sin
A soul so false as thine?

Nor strange 'twould be, if ne'er again,
Till age had wasted youth,
That heart betrayed by such as thou,
Could trust in human truth.

But go! and though thy wiles no more
Will move my heart to strife,
Canst glad thy vain soul with the thought
That thou hast wrecked a life.

LIGHT BEYOND.

Is your heart bowed down with sorrow;
Does your lot the hardest seem;
Think you of a brighter morrow,
Of a fairer future dream.

Have your prospects all been blighted;
Has each promise proved a snare;
Deepest wrongs are sometime righted,
Never yield you to despair.

Has the slanderer's tongue unsparing
Ruthless tarnished with its stain;
Was your good name worth the wearing—
Go and win it back again.

Would you rest where sunshine lingers;
You must toil the darkness through;
Only work with willing fingers,
Only live you brave and true.

Never care or trouble borrow,
"Trouble's real if it seems"—
Ever see a bright to-morrow,
Though you see it but in dreams.

A NEGLECTED "WOMAN'S RIGHT."

I have listened to this cry of "Woman's Rights," this clamoring for the ballot, for redress for woman's wrongs, and I could but think, amid it all, that there is one "woman's right"—the right that could make the widest redress for woman's wrongs—which she holds in her own hands and does not exercise. It is the right to defend, to uplift and ennoble womankind; to be as lenient to a plea for mercy from a fallen woman as though that plea had come from the lips of a fallen man; to throw around her also the broad mantle of charity, and if she would try to reform, give her a chance. Far be it from any honest woman to countenance the abandoned wretch who plies an unholy calling in defiance of all morality, for her very breath is contamination; but why should you greet with smiles and warmest handclasps of friendship the man who pays his money for her blackened soul? When two human beings ruled by the same mysterious nature, have yielded to temptations and fallen, what is this monster of social distinction that excuses the sin of one as a folly or indiscretion, while it makes that of the other a crime, which a lifetime cannot retrieve? It is a strange justice that condones the fault of one while it condemns the other even to death; that gives to one, when dead, funeral rite and Christian burial and to the other the Morgue and a dishonored

grave, simply because one is a strong man and the other a weak woman. And it is a stranger, sadder truth that 'tis woman's influence which metes out this justice to woman. Mother, if you must look with scorn and contempt upon the woman who through her love for some man has gone down to destruction, do not smilingly acknowledge her paramour a worthy suitor for your own unsullied daughter. Maiden, if you must sneeringly raise your white hand and push back into the depths of pollution the woman who seeks to reinstate herself in the path of rectitude, do not permit the man who keeps half a dozen mistresses to clasp his arm around your waist and whirl you away to the soft measure of the "Beautiful Blue Danube." If the ban of society forbids that you say to a penitent sin-sick sister, "Go and sin no more," if you *must* consign her to the life of infamy which inevitably follows the deaf ear which you turn upon her appeal, then do it; but in God's name do not turn around and throw open the doors of your homes and welcome to the sanctity of your family altars the man who enticed her to ruin. Ah, woman, by your tireless efforts you may win the right to vote, your voice may be heard in the Assembly Halls of the Nation; but if you administer as one-sided a justice in political life as you do in social life, the reform for which you pray will never come!

WOULD YOU CARE?

All day on my pillow I wearily lay,
With a stabbing pain at my heart,
With throbbing temples, and a feverish thirst
Burning, my lips apart.
If I longed for a touch of your soft, strong hand,
For you one little minute there;
For a smile, or a kiss, or a word to bless,
Would you blame me, love?—would you care?

When the long, long, lonesome day was done,
And you never for a moment came,
If I tried to shut you out of my heart,
Impatient at your name;
If disappointment's bitter sting
Was harder than pain to bear,
If I turned away with a doubting frown,
Would you blame me, love?—would you care?

Should I die to-night, and you saw me not
Again till my soul had fled
With its vain request, and my features wore
The white hue of the dead—
Would you place just once, in a last caress,
Your hand on my death-damp hair?
Would you give me a thought, or a fond regret?
Would you kiss me, love?—would you care?

A THOUGHT OF HEAVEN.

Friend of my heart, you say to me
That your belief is this—
That heaven is but a vision rare,
Of pure, ethereal bliss.

And life there but a dream enhanced,
Where never sound alarms ;
Where flowers ne'er fade and skies ne'er cloud,
And voiceless music charms—

And save as see we in our dreams
The dear ones gone before,
The friends that here we knew and loved,
We'll know and love no more.

An endless and unbroken rest,
Nor change, nor night, nor day,
Where aimless, as in sleep, we'll dream
Eternity away.

Sweet friend of mine, that Heaven of thine
Methinks is overblest ;
We could not work on earth enough
To need so long a rest.

Our human nature could not be
  Content with rest like this,
And even bliss would cloy, if we
  Had nothing else but bliss.

Great Nature's hand, its every plan,
  Has laid in wise design,
But what design, or use, is in
  This theory of thine?

If, when our earth-career is done,
  All conscious life must cease,
And we drift on, and on, and on,
  In endless, dreamy peace—

If Heaven is but a mystic spell,
  Whose glowing visions thrall,
Why should we have a life beyond?
  Why have a Heaven at all?

CONSOLANCE.

"Be brave?" why, yes, I will; I'll never more despair;
Who could, with such sweet comforting as yours?
How, like the voice that stilled the tempest air,
Your mild philosophy its reasoning pours.

Go you and build a temple to the skies, and make
Your soul an alter-offering on the pile;
Then, from its lightning-riven ruin, take
Your crushed and bleeding self, and calmly smile.

When loud, and fierce, and wild, a storm sweeps o'er your rest,
Say that it soothes you—brings you peace again;
Laugh while the hot steel quivers in your breast,
And "make believe" you love the scorching pain.

See every earthly thing your life is woven round,
Fall, drop by drop, until your heart is seived!
Go mad, and writhe, and moan upon the ground,
And curse and die, and say that you have prayed and lived!

Then come to me, as now, and I will take your hand,
And look upon your face and smile and say:
"All were not born to hold a magic wand;
Cheer up, my friend, you must be brave alway."

WHEN THE ROSES GO.

You tell me you love me; you bid me believe
That never such lover could mean to deceive.
You tell me the tale which a million times
Has been told, and talked, and sung in rhymes;
You rave o'er my "eyes" and my "beautiful hair,"
And swear to be true, as they always swear;
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go,
And lovers are rovers oft, you know,
When the roses go.

I have heard of a woman, sweet and fair,
With dewy lips and shining hair,
And you pledged to her, on your bended knee,
The self-same vow you make to me.
She was fairer far than I, I know;
She was pure and true, and she loved you so;
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go—
How she learned that trouble comes, *you know*,
When the roses go.

You're a man in each outward sense, I trow,
With the stamp of a god on your peerless brow.
You hold my hand in your thrilling clasp,
And my heart grows weak in your subtle grasp,
Till I blush in the light of your tender eyes,

And dream of a far-off paradise—
Almost forgetting that ever from there
Another was turned in her bleak despair.
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go—
I will answer you, love, my love, you know,
When the roses go.

THE DIFFERENCE.

With odds all against him, struggling to gain
From fortune a name, with life to maintain,
Toiling in sunshine, toiling in rain,
Never waiting a blessing Heaven-sent,
Working and winning his way as he went—
Whether he starved, or sumptuously fared,
Nobody knew and nobody cared.

With success-crowned effort that fate had defied,
That wrought out from fortune what favor denied,
Standing aloof from the world in his pride;
The niche he has carved on fame's slippery wall
Friends are proclaiming with heraldry-call.
His Crœsus-bright scepter has magical sway,
Yester's indifference solicits to-day.
His daring, his triumph, how daily he fares,
Every one knows, and anxiously cares.

BEWARE!

Beautiful maiden,
So daintily fair,
Thy rosy-hued lips,
Thy soft, flowing hair,
Symmetric perfection,
Sweet, winning face,
The charms that thou wearest
A palace might grace;
And yet thy bright beauty
May wreck and despair.
Beautiful maiden,
Beware! oh, beware!

There are flattering tongues
That 'twere death to believe,
And lovers who woo
But to win and deceive;
For innocent feet
There is many a snare.
Beautiful maiden,
Beware! oh, beware!

A REGRET.

Close on my heart was resting
A sunny golden head,
As the dim gray of the twilight
Crept round with noiseless tread.

"Tell me a 'tory, mamma,"
The blue-eyed baby said,
"About some itty birdie
In za itty birdie bed.

"'Bout fen oo was itty
An' ze mens was wakin' hay
An' found free ittie birdies
Wiz za muzzer don away."

"Some other time, my darling;
Mamma's tired now."
A shade of disappointment
Swept over baby's brow.

The dear blue eyes grew misty;
O, lips that lived to blame,
That kissed and whispered "sometime"—
That "sometime" never came.

Again the dim, gray twilight
Creeps round with noiseless tread,
But on my heart is resting
No sunny golden head.

No sweet voice pleads with mamma
"Tell me a 'tory" now,
And only death can take away
The shadow on my brow.

"IT IS LIFE TO DIE."

"It is life to die," the muse has sung,
The prophet words have rung from pole to pole,
The trust, the hope to which have many clung,
An echo woke in many a weary soul.

"Ah! welcome thrice if but that death would come
As sweeps the avalanche from Alpine hight,
As falls the flashing storm-sent lightning-bolt,
Resistless in its terror and its might.

But oh! to die by slowest slow decay,
To clothe a dying heart in life's warm breath,
When every day repeats a long eternity,
And every hour is but another death!"

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O, God! why were we born to live a life,
From very thought of which our souls must shrink,
To sink down in the waves of human strife,
And ever only wait, and wait and think.

No wonder that so many hapless ones,
Too sensitive the specter to defy,
Arm, Hamlet-like, against a sea of woes,
And test the truth, that "it is life to die."

O, SPEAK IT NOT.

O, speak not hastily the word
Thine ear from idle tongues has heard.
If false the tale thou couldst recall,
How hard and cruel must it fall?
If true, why, helping it along
Will never, never right the wrong.
O, speak it not, nor speak the word
That wounds, though but in jest 'tis heard;
Keep back the thrust, the look askance,
The petty doubt, the sneering glance;
Keep back the taunts and jeers,
Life has enough of breaking hearts,
Of pointed barbs and venomed darts—
Enough of pain and tears.

A SHATTERED IDOL.

O blame me not for the cruel words
In a moment of madness said;
The shadow that fell upon my life,
Is cold as the shrouded dead.
Deem not I am hard and heartless;
My tears are as warm as thine;
'Twas clay that I crowned and worshiped,
And wept o'er its crumbled shrine.

To me, my passionate, deathless soul,
Was less than his finger-tips;
He turned away from the gold of my love
For the dross on a wanton's lips.
My faith in his truth is broken—
Even truth itself is a lie.
I have cursed him!—but I love him,
And I'll love him till I die.

POOR LITTLE JOE.

A ring on the door bell,
Some one at the door,
Mute asking admittance
Where never before
A stranger in midnight,
In silence and stealth,
Sought access to gain
In a mansion of wealth.
Into the gaslight
A package is borne ;
Quickly from round it
The wrappings are torn.
What is it? a baby !
What seek you to-night,
So rosy and smiling,
Nor in fear, nor in fright?

Ah ! little intruder,
What is it you wear
So close to your breast ?
Sure but hand in despair
Could have written the message
Unconscious you bear,
And "loved" and "God blessed" you
While leaving you there.

Let's see what the story
'Tis telling for you;
How brief and pathetic;
But can it be true?
A mother heart brokenly
Praying in grief
From hand of a stranger
Her baby's relief.
"He's helpless and homeless,
But stainless as snow;
O, take him and keep him—
My poor little Joe."

That's all there is of it,
If false or if true;
Yet long enough seems it,
And sad enough, too.
No love-welcome greeted
The sweet baby face,
In the life that gave his life
There was not a place.
No place for the baby,
There's none for him here,
No heart that may give him
A smile or a tear.
Off to the refuge,
For such, he must go,
He's only a foundling—
Poor little Joe.

Deserted, forsaken,
Thrust out in the strife,
Adrift on the pitiless
Ocean of life.
What will become of him,
Who may decide
If good or if evil
His life shall betide.
No tender caresses
Ever to know,
Nor guidance, nor blessing—
Poor little Joe.

FATE.

Ruth was a laughing-eyed prattler,
Thoughtless, and happy, and free;
She planted a seed in the garden,
And said: "It will grow to a tree—
A beautiful blossoming tree."

The birds and the squirrels played round it,
As careless and merry was she,
But no tree ever grew from her planting—
No beautiful blossoming tree.

Ruth was a winsome-faced maiden,
Happy, and hopeful, and free ;
She planted a seed in the garden,
And smilingly waited to see—
A beautiful blossoming tree.

She covered the ground up with flowers,
The butterfly came, and the bee,
But no tree ever grew from her planting—
No beautiful blossoming tree.

Ruth was a pale saddened woman,
Thoughtful, with tremblings and fears,
She planted a seed in the garden,
And watered the place with her tears—
And watched it with tremblings and fears.

The winds and the rains beat upon it,
The lightnings flashed o'er it in glee ;
But she sleeps 'neath the tree of her planting—
A beautiful blossoming tree.

THE GHOSTS IN THE HEART.

They came in the hush of the midnight,
In the glare of the noonday start
Out from the graves we made them—
The graves we made in the heart.

There is love with its fickle fancies;
Its grave was so wide and deep,
And we heaped the mound with oblivion,
But the soul of love could not sleep.

And hate! ah, we buried it deeper
Than all the rest of the train;
But one word through memory flashing,
And its ghost comes back again.

There are phantoms of sunshiny hours
That fled when the summer time fled,
And specters that mock while they haunt us,
Long buried, but never dead.

And ever and ever an hour
Will come that the heart-wraiths control,
Till down from Eternity's tower
A banshee shall ring for the soul.

ONLY A TRAMP.

Only a tramp by the roadside dead,
  Only a tramp—who cares?
His feet are bare, his dull eyes stare,
  And the wind plays freaks with his unkempt hair.
The sun rose up and the sun went down,
  But nobody missed him from the town
Where he begged for bread 'till the day was dead.
  He's only a tramp—who cares?
Only a tramp, a nuisance gone.
  One more tramp less—who cares?

  Ghastly and gray, in the lane all day,
A soiled, dead heap of human clay.
  Would the wasted crumbs in the rich man's hall,
Where the gas-lights gleam and the curtains fall,
  Have given him a longer lease of breath—
Have saved the wretch from starving to death?
  He's only a tramp—who cares?

Only a tramp! was he ever more
  Than a beggar tramp? Who cares?
Was the hard-lined face ever dimpled and sweet?
  Has a mother kissed those rough brown feet,
And thought their tramping a sweeter strain
  Than ever will waken her ear again?

Does somebody kneel 'way over the sea,
Praying "Father, bring back my boy to me?"
Does somebody watch and weep and pray
For the tramp who lies dead in the lane to-day?
He's only a tramp—who cares?

PUT FLOWERS ON MY GRAVE.

When dead, no imposing funeral rite,
Nor line of praise I crave;
But drop your tears upon my face—
Put flowers on my grave.

Close not in narrow wall the place
In which my heart finds rest,
Nor mark with tow'ring monument
The sod above my breast.

Nor carve on gleaming, marble slab
A burning thought, or deed,
Or word of love, or praise, or blame,
For stranger eyes to read.

But deep, deep in your heart of hearts,
A tender mem'ry save;
Upon my dead face drop your tears—
Put flowers on my grave.

OLD AUNT LUCY.

Why into that darkened chamber
  Walk you with such noiseless tread?
No slumbering one will awaken—
  The sheeted form is dead.

Why gaze on the rigid features,
  So white in death's embrace,
With such look of awe and pity?
  'Tis only the same old face.

Why touch you now so tender
  The hands that silent lay?
They 're only the sunburned fingers
  That toiled for you night and day.

Why now, with tear-dimmed vision,
  So softly do you press
Upon the wrinkled forehead
  Your lips in sad caress?

How much of care had lighted
  That lingering, loving kiss,
Had you in life but gave it—
  You never thought of this.

No loving hand e'er brightened
Her life with tender care,
No mother's baby-kisses
Were ever hers to share.

Only for others caring,
The long, long years have fled;
Now, only, they say,—the neighbors—
"Poor old Aunt Lucy's dead."

And they whisper a girl's ambition,
A name in the world to make;
'Way back in her vanished youth-time,
Gave up for a duty's sake.

But whatever had been the story
Of love, or grief, or woe,
It died with the heart, and no one
Will ever care or know.

The hands were hard and toil-stained,
And sallow the cheeks and chin,
But whiter not the snow-wreath
Than the soul that dwelt within.

And methinks a crown resplendent—
Just over the waveless sea—
With gems of self-denial,
Awaits for such as she.

UNSPOKEN WORDS.

Unspoken words may thrill the heart,
Their meaning be more deeply felt
Than all the glowing oratory
Poured at the shrine where reason knelt.
The fairest pictures art conceives,
The noblest sentiments of mind,
The loveliest, purest gems of thought
Are those which never are defined.

The hand that paints the rainbow dyes
Ne'er leaves a trace its skill to show—
The art that gilds the sunset skies
And tints the flower, we may not know.
Nor may we know the wizard power
Which o'er our being wields control,
Nor how, when silence seals the lips,
Heart speaks to heart and soul to soul.

We do not know from whence the life
Imbued in crystal drop of rain,
Nor why, when torn and trampled on,
The rose's fragrance will remain.
Nor know we why the tender tone
Will linger when love's dream is fled,
Nor why the smile we loved will live,
Although the face it wreathed be dead.

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Some strangely fascinating spell
Steals o'er the heart in ethic's hour;
We know not what, nor how, nor why,
Still must we own we feel its power—
A power that wakens slumbering dreams,
Intangible emotion swells,
That penetrates the soul's deep fount,
And greets the tide that from it wells.

It is not charm of form or face,
Nor is it long contact of years
That wins this mutual soul response,
This spirit sympathy endears.
A theory by time engraved
From life, one mad impulse may sweep—
A glance may into being start
Vain hopes that nevermore may sleep.

The quiet touch when hands are clasped
Would seemingly no sense impart,
Yet may it wake a deathless theme
And send it quivering to the heart.
And thus may kindred spirits feel,
Though tone of voice be never heard,
The sweet, impassioned eloquence,
The magic of unspoken words.

O! TAKE AWAY YOUR FLOWERS.

O! take your pale camelias back;
Their soft leaves, waxen white
And odorless, too ill accord
With my dark mood to-night.

I do not want your hot-house flowers,
They 're like the love you give—
A something tame and passionless
That breathes but does not live.

You take my hand as though you feared
Your clasp were over-bold,
Your kiss falls light at flake of snow,
And just as calm and cold.

I'd rather have your hatred
Than this lifeless loving claim,
If your heart beat one throb faster
At mention of my name.

Leave me, and bind those soulless leaves
A calmer brow above;
I cannot wear your flowers to-night—
I do not want your love.

RAIN.

Drop! drop! drop!
With a ceaseless patter fall,
With a sobbing sound on the sodden ground,
And the gray clouds over all.
Dost weep of the parted summer,
O, spirit of the rain?
For the vanished hours and the faded flowers
That never can come again?

The farmer smiles at thy weeping,
Hushing the whispering leaves,
And dreams of days in the Autumn haze
And the gathered golden sheaves.
There's a voice of hope, a promise,
In the sound of thy refrain,
And as bright the hours and as fair the flowers
That will come to thee again.

And yet in our lives, though knowing
That we hold a scepter's sway,
How oft we turn with the thoughts that burn,
To weep on Autumn day.
Turn from the hopeful future
To weep in grief and pain,
For the vanished hours and the faded flowers
That never can come again.

I LOVE HIM FOR HIS EYES.

They praise the baby's dimpled hands,
His brow so broad and fair,
They kiss the dainty rose-bud mouth,
Caress the sunny hair.
His lisping words, his tottling steps,
His smiles they praise and prize,
They love him for his cunning ways,
I love him for his eyes.

The wealth of golden tinted curls
Old Time will streak with snow ;
The rose-bud mouth so dainty curved
To sterner lines will grow.
The fleeting years will mark with change
Each feature now they prize,
Save only the sweet eyes I love—
I love him for him eyes.

Those wondrous, wondrous soulful eyes,
How strange the spell they fling
Unconsciously around my heart ;
What memories they bring !
What buried hours come thronging back—
A distant, dearer clime—
Another pair of love-lit eyes,
Another summer time.

Oh, baby, take your eyes away:
They burn into my heart!
I'll kiss you once, and say good-by,
And hide the tears that start;
But through the years to come and go,
The changful scenes to rise,
I'll love the little baby boy—
I love him for his eyes.

ONLY.

Only a sentence earnest spoke,
With never a thought to word it,
Fell like balm from the sea of calm,
On the aching heart that heard it.

Only a glance, a scornful smile,
A wavering purpose altered,
Goaded a hand the crime to do
At which before it faltered.

Only a kiss, a love caress,
Tender and trustful given,
Banished a cloud from brow of care,
Made home a woman's Heaven.

Only a secret, chance disclosed,
Whence secret should be never,
A doubt crept into the heart that loved
And its light went out forever.

Only a prayer, a wrong confessed,
By suppliant lowly kneeling,
Opened the gate where the angels wait,
Life's Eden field revealing.

Careful then scatter the little things,
They make life drear and lonely,
Or strew its way with flowers gay,—
We live by trifles only.

SOMEBODY'S BABY'S DEAD.

A hearse all draped in mourning,
With white plumes overhead,
Bearing a little coffin—
Somebody's baby's dead.

Upon the velvet cover
Some hand has placed a wreath,
White as the waxen features
Of the baby that lies beneath.

Out in the graveyard making
A rest for a shining head,
Somebody's heart is breaking,
Somebody's baby's dead.

Over a baby's coffin,
Heaping a mound of clay,
Somebody's hopes are buried
In that little grave to-day.

Somebody's home is dreary,
Sombody's sunshine fled,
Somebody's sad and weary,
Somebody's baby's dead.

THE WITHERED ROSEBUD.

I gathered you, sweet little rosebud,
With a dew crown encircling your head;
Now, out of the window I toss you,
Shriveled, and scentless, and dead.
You had opened to wondrous perfection,
Had only my hand let you pass;
Yet here you have perished for water—
I forgot to put some in the glass.

Ah! poor little withered, dead rosebud,
How many a weak human heart,
Too like you, has famishing perished,
When life had but only a start?
Yes, many a heart, little rosebud,
Loving, and tender, and true,
For water has faded and withered,
And died in its beauty like you,
Not because there was dearth of life's fountain,
Nor the blessing to all might not pass,
But because the strong hand which it clung to
Forgot to put some in its glass.

MY SHIPS HAVE COME FROM SEA.

You are watching a ship, O, maiden fair,
With parted lips and wistful air,
The ship that out from the sheltered bay
With white sails spread moves slow away;
And I know, my girl, the thoughts that burn
In your heart are of that ship's return.
Ah! I know so well how your pulses beat,
With the great sea sobbing at your feet;
And the yellow stars in southern skies
Are brighter not than your love-bright eyes.
I, too, have stood on the sea-wet sand
And tearful waved a farewell hand,
And watched with many a longing prayer.
My face, like yours, was young and fair,
And my eyes were bright as the diamond's glow;
They've lost their sparkle—long ago.
I stand alone on the beach to-day,
Watching the ships that sail away;
But never a sail from over the sea
The flowing tide will bring to me,
My ships have come from sea.

The first was builded with childish hand,
It floated away a castle grand—
A beautiful bubble with rainbow hues,

Lined with the crystal of morning dews ;
To break at my feet by the sunny sea,
A beautiful bubble came back to me—
Came back from my ship at sea.

I fashioned another in gladsome way
And sent it forth on a Summer day.
I see it yet, a fairer craft,
Never at danger mocking laughed ;
Its shrouds were the sheen of happy hours,
Its helm a wreath of orange flowers ;
And I freighted it down with love and truth,
The golden hopes of my sunny youth.
Had it lived the storm—but it could not be,
A stranded wreck on the surf-washed lea,
My ship came home from sea.

And then a smiling fairy bark,
A fragile, precious-freighted ark,
Out on life's ocean drear and dark.
And I prayed to God, as I never before,
To shield this bark from the tempest's roar,
To spare me this—but it could not be,
A tiny coffin came back to me—
Came back from my ship at sea.

With reckless hand I launched again,
A venture on the treacherous main,
Bound for ambition's dizzy court ;
Sailed from a hopeless, loveless port ;

With gloomy walls whose silence chilled,
With ghostly haunting memories filled,
With never a breath of the roses dead;
Never a rest for a weary head,
Never a dream of a sweet to be,
Hopeless, loveless still, to me,
My ship came home from sea.

The last, and least, of all the ships
Fashioned with hands, and heart, and lips,
I pushed from shore with its decks untrod,
And the freight it bore was my faith in God.
I recked not whither its way, nor when,
Nor how, if ever, 'twould come again,
And this, alone, came back to me,
Rich-laden from the stormy sea.
And so, sweet maiden, while your dreams
Paint fairest all that fairest seems,
I stand with you and watch to-day
The ship that sails from the shore away;
But never a sail from over the sea
The flowing tide will bring to me—
My ships have come from sea.

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MADGE MORRIS WAGNER.

S. F. Call. Oct. 9. 1892

One of California's Truest Poets.

VERSE FILLED WITH MELODY

She Has Pictured Life and Death—Not Only a Sweet Poet, but a Tender-hearted, Practical Woman.

Written for THE MORNING CALL.

"And some Orient dawn had found me
Kneeling at the house of fame."

Fame found Madge Morris Wagner in the blazing Colorado Desert, her fingers on the pulse of Nature at fever heat. Or, at least, thither sent Lippincotts of Philadelphia to find her the other day and persuade her to speak through them to the world. And this is what she said, like all who are truly great teachers, making a text of the place and the time:

TO THE COLORADO DESERT.

Thou brown, bare-breasted, voiceless mystery,
Hot sphinx of nature, cactus-crowned, what hast
thou done?
Unclothed and mute as when the groans of chaos
turned
Thy naked burning bosom to the sun.
The mountain silences have speech, the rivers sing,
Thou answerest never unto anything.
Pink-throated lizards pant within the shade;
The horned toad runs rustling in the heat;
The shadowy gray coyote, born afraid,
Steals to some brackish spring and laps, and prowls
Away, and howls and howls and howls and howls,
Until the solitude is shaken with an added loneli-
ness.
Thy sharp mescal shoots up a giant stalk,
Its century of yearning, to the sunburnt skies,
And drips rare honey from the lips
Of yellow waxen flowers, and dies.
Some lengthwise sun-dried shapes with feet and
hands
And thirsty mouths pressed on the sweltering sands,
Mark here and there a gruesome graveless spot
Where some one drank thy scorching hotness, and
is not.
God must have made thee in his anger, and forgot.

Not since I can remember have I heard a voice so true as this. It is like the sublime and solemn bass of St. John. It is even John the Baptist crying in the wilderness. Indeed, I doubt if you will find anything more terribly truthful and fearfully sublime this side of Job than this one lone, lorn cry from the desert. A photograph, even were such a thing possible, could not be more ghastly and ghastly exact. It is true poetry, and therefore more really true than the ordinary forms of truth. For truth can only be told entirely by figures of speech—poetry. There are not words enough in all the languages of this world to tell even the simplest truth exactly, even if there were time enough in the world. We must depend upon figures of speech, as did the seers of the Orient, for the exact truth. But the figures must be true, stately, majestic, impressive. This is poetry; and true poetry is in this sense not only the highest form of truth, but it is the only real truth that is uttered. When the world comes to comprehend poetry it will have a great deal more truth, less quibbling about words, legal technicalities, legal lies.

Turn back and read this poem from Lippincott's on the Colorado Desert again, please. You can read it with profit and a certain sort of solemn pleasure a dozen times. There are lines here that are texts, sermons.

God must have made thee in his anger and forgot.

Madge Morris Wagner has been all her life with us out here on the great seabank I believe; born in Oregon I think. At least I know her father was "a mighty hunter" in Oregon; and her uncle, Bishop Morris, was a Virginian. Maybe, she, too, was a Virginian. I neither know nor care. We fill our books up with the dates and place of birth, things that don't amount to a peanut, and leave little room for deeds or utterances.

What will we do when we come to have 24,000 years of history and biography behind us? Why, we will say as the Chinese say, "This poet lived in a certain dynasty and said so and so." That is all.

So I shall proceed to say what this strange, strong woman of the desert has said from out her heart of hearts. For she is a woman, a very human, tender woman. And you will concede before you have done reading the little bits of her sweet soul which I am permitted to give you that it is great impertinence in me to say much when she is singing. And I want you to know distinctly that these next lines of hers are as exactly true in all respects as her lines on the Colorado Desert. Her only little baby had gone away from her, out from the one narrow room and away to beyond the darkness; but in the next narrow room, a stronger woman nursed and rocked and cradled her stronger child, and kept rocking on her heart. And so there and then, out of the awful agony and desolation, she sang, as she sang only the other day from

the desert:

I hear her rocking the baby—
Her room is just next to mine—
And I fancy I feel the dimpled arms
That round her neck entwine,
As she rocks, and rocks the baby,
In the room just next to mine.
I hear her rocking the baby
Each day when the twilight comes,
And I know there's a world of blessing and love
In the "baby bye" she hums.
I can see the restless fingers
Playing with "mamma's rings."
And the sweet little smiling, pouting mouth,
That to hers in kissing clings,
As she rocks and sings to the baby,
And dreams as she rocks and sings.

I hear her rocking the baby,
Slower and s ower now,
And I know she is leaving her good-night kiss
On its eyes, and cheeks and brow.
From her rocking, rocking, rocking,
I wonder would she start,
Could she know, through the wall between us,
She was rocking on my heart.
While my empty arms are aching
For a form they may not press
And my emptier heart is breaking
In its desolate loneliness.

I list to the rocking, rocking,
In the room just next to mine,
And breathe a prayer in silence
At a mother's broken shrine,
For the woman who rocks the baby
In the room just next to mine.

Now and then the winds blow a leaf of hers from the desert or from San Diego, where she edits her Golden Era Magazine, away beyond the seas to Europe; but her own country has been very careless about her, save to pick up her thoughts and air them in the poet's corner of the classics as time surges by. And she has been and is quite as careless of the world; brave, bonnie, beautiful little Madge Morris.

"It's a beast of a name," said Sir ——, as he leaned on an elbow and dipped the stub end of a celery stick in the salt. "Yes, I know Madge Morris is a silly sort of name. But if her name happens to be Morris and her uncle a Bishop who baptized her as Madge in memory of his mother and her grandmother, and—

"God bless me, sir, it's a good name, a brave, good name, and I honor her for having made it worthy of inquiry in Europe."

I think little more need be said here. Turn back and read about the rocking of the baby. And if there are not tears in your eyes and tenderness in your heart, if you are not better indeed for the reading of it in all respects, why all that I might say in these pages till the going down of the sun would neither profit you nor please you.

Here are the two extremes of song—the solitude, nakedness, desolation, mystery and awful death and dearth of the boundless desert; and the crooning cradle song, the baby, whose utmost bound and limit of life is its mother's encircling arms. She has pictured life and death. You can hear the mother rocking, rocking; you can see the dead men lying in the sands in her song of the Colorado Desert as you rarely see shapes in any song—

Some lengthwise sun-dried shapes with feet and hands.

And right here I am tempted to take enough of your time to say that the coyote is photographed in a single line more correctly than he has yet been described in columns.

I concede that it is not melodious to say, "he howls and howls and howls and howls"; but then the coyote is not traveling on his notes. He is not melodious; he simply howls. Then he howls more; then more and more. That is all. God made him. Madge Morris did not make him. She merely took his photograph; and for the first time it ever was really taken.

In conclusion let me assure you that Mrs. Wagner has not written of the desert from a car window. On the contrary she knows and she loves the desert as a sailor knows and loves the ocean. Her tent is there season after season and the mercury above par. For she and her enterprising husband, Harr Wagner, believe in Arizona as I believe in her. And you may know that more than a dozen years ago I named the Colorado River "The New Nile," in either the North American Review or the Independent, and pointed out that this vast valley of dust and desert sand would and could produce enough to more than feed the whole United States.

No, Madge Morris Wagner is no sentimentalist. Such idlers who profess poetry give us not gold, but brass—not bread, but a stone. She is a quiet, hard worker, a practical woman, endowed with that one best things of all things to have in a family, common-sense.

You all remember her firm hand and fair face here with us in San Francisco when we were establishing Arbor day. She was editing the famous Golden Era then, as she is still, when she can get a cowboy to carry copy out from the Colorado Desert.

She is still planting trees, she and her husband, Harr Wagner. And they are planting ideas, too, persistently, for they, like all thinkers, are teachers, and although he holds only the office of Superintendent of Schools for San Diego County he has in a very few years, by the help of a few faithful colaborers, lifted that end of the State in letters as a soldier lifts his banner of victory in the sun. The future of such people is not behind them.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

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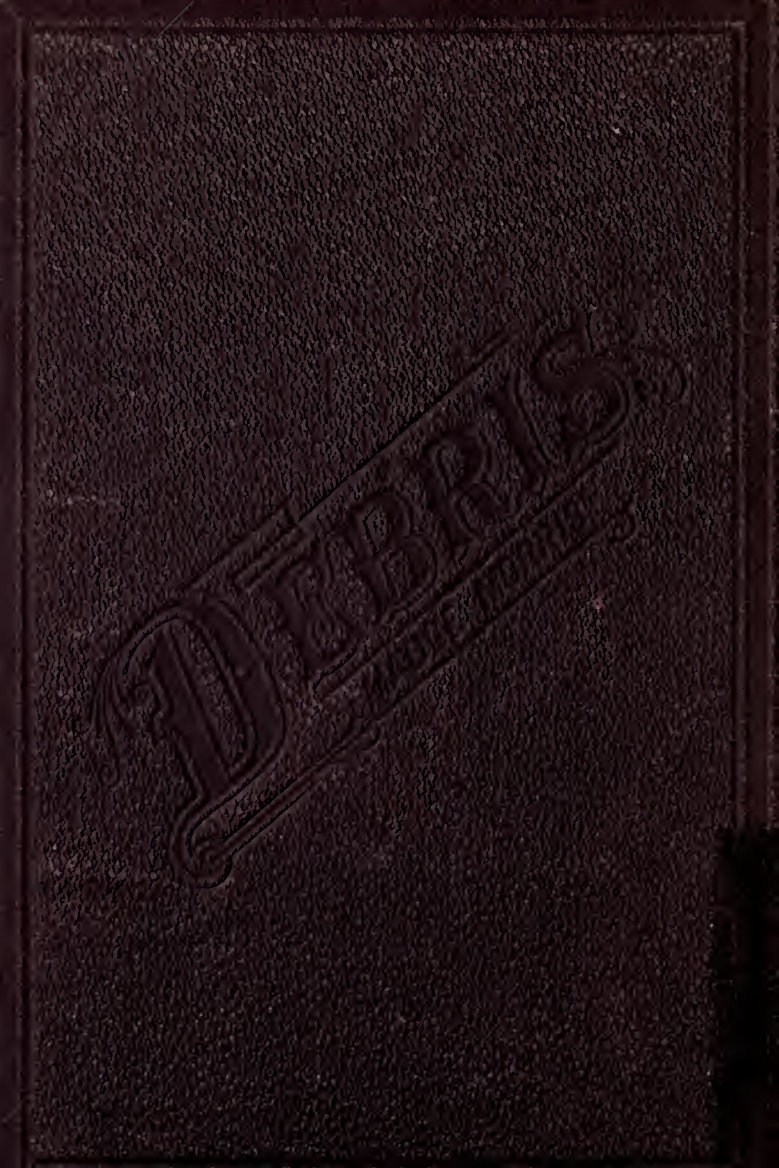
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